

REMOTE AND LONE WORKERS

REMOTE WORKERS

Remote workers are any employee that does not work in the designated office area, be that at home or in a different workspace. You still have a duty to protect their health and safety even when they are not in the office.

LONE WORKERS

Lone workers are workers that work alone or without close or direct supervision. A home worker would also fall under this category.

The guidance below applies to both lone workers and remote workers.

WHAT ARE YOUR DUTIES?

You will need to:

- Ensure the employee is at high risk in their workspace.
- Carry out a risk assessment
- Check if the work environment is suitable.
- Provide relevant information, instruction and training
- Maintain regular communication with your workers.
- Provide suitable work equipment and is maintained. Also ensure the employee knows how to use the equipment safely.
- Ensure that the work being done will not negatively affect the health of others in the location.

For lone workers you must consider these additional points:

- Can they operate equipment safely and can they enter and leave the premises safely?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Is the employee medically fit to be a lone worker?

PROVIDING WORK EQUIPMENT

If you are providing work equipment such as a computer or hand tools, you will have duties under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER). These are some of the things that you will need to consider:

- The equipment is suitable for the job being done, for example providing a computer which is compatible with the software being used
- The equipment is checked regularly so that it is safe to use, for example inspecting hand tools at regular intervals
- The equipment is maintained and kept in good repair, for example checking for damaged cables
- Providing information and training is provided on how to use the equipment safely

MANUAL HANDLING

If your workers have to travel then portable equipment must be provided. Because excessive lifting and moving could cause injury, for this equipment you must complete a manual handling risk assessment to protect staff.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work environment hazards include:

- Risk of violence
- Weather conditions
- Construction work taking place on site
- Any activity which is happening at the same site which could put them at risk.

ACCIDENTS

You must have a procedure in place for lone and remote workers to report accidents or incidents that may happen which are work related.

MENTAL WELLBEING

Remote and lone working can lead to feelings of isolation and a difficulty to switch off, this can lead to poor mental health. Here are some suggestions on how to manage lone and remote workers mental health:

- Having regular contact
- Asking workers to attend the office regularly.
- Include workers in events and socials
- Make workers feel part of the organisation by including them in company news etc
- Setting up an answer machine for workers so they can switch off at the end of the day and calls can go through to the answerphone.

TRAVELLING

If your employees will be driving you must consider:

- Encourage the use of public transport if it is practical
- Ensure employees are capable drivers by making regular checks on their driving license and if necessary provide training or health checks
- Ensure the vehicle they are using is safe, for those using their own vehicle you may want to request a copy of their most recent MOT certificate
- If you are providing a company vehicle then you will need to make sure it is regularly inspected and maintained
- That employees have relevant insurance that covers these driving activities
- Providing a first aid kit to keep in the vehicle
- Having a clear policy about your expectations of safe driving standards, for example the use of mobile phones
- Setting realistic time frames to complete journeys to avoid the need to speed or to drive in bad weather

COMMUNICATION

You must have a method of communication so employees can report concerns and dangerous situations. Methods of communication can include text messages or phone calls.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Where your employees are working on the premises of another business, you will need to find out in advance about their evacuation and emergency procedures. This information will need to be given to the employee.

For lone workers you must consider what emergencies could arise and have a procedure in place to account for the emergency in question.

EMPLOYEE DUTIES

Employees working alone or remotely must take all reasonable steps for the safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their actions. They must:

- Work according to any instructions and training you have given them
- Report any hazards not addressed, for example a frayed cable on their computer.

USEFUL LINKS

- Top Tips For Remote Working:
<https://local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/wellbeing/remote-working-top-tips>

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